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 ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 HA-05 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01
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E.O. 11652 GDS
 TAGS SHUM, AR
 SUBJECT DISAPPEARANCES REPORTED OF MOTHERS OF PLAZA DE MAYO
 AND THEIR SUPPORTERS

1. SUMMARY: IN WHAT APPEARS TO BE CONCERTED GOVERNMENT ACTION,
 ABOUT SIXTEEN PERSONS ASSOCIATED THE "MOTHERS OF THE PLAZA DE MAYO"
 ARE REPORTED TO HAVE BEEN TAKEN BY SECURITY AUTHORITIES ON
 DECEMBER 8. ANOTHER WOMAN PROMINENT IN THE MOVEMENT WAS SNATCHED
 DECEMBER 10. THE WHEREABOUTS OF THOSE TAKEN ARE UNKNOWN. DEPARTMENT
 AND EMBASSY HAVE BEEN ASKED TO HELP SEEK RELEASE OF THESE PERSONS.
 END SUMMARY.

2. SOME FIFTEEN PERSONS--BOTH WOMEN AND MEN--ASSOCIATED WITH THE
 "MOTHERS OF THE PLAZA DE MAYO" PROTEST MOVEMENT WERE TAKEN INTO
 CUSTODY THE EVENING OF DECEMBER 8 FROM THE STEPS OF A CHURCH BY
 PERSONS WHO DESCRIBED THEMSELVES AS SECURITY OFFICERS. ON THE SAME
 NIGHT REMO BERARDO, AN ACTIVIST SUPPORTER OF THE MOTHERS GROUP WAS
 PICKED UP AT HIS HOME IN BUENOS AIRES' LA BOCA DISTRICT.
 EARLY SATURDAY MORNING DECEMBER 10 SEVERAL UNIDENTIFIED MEN
 PICKED UP MRS. ASUSANA DE VICENTI, THE MOTHER CREDITED WITH HAVING
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ORIGINATED THE IDEA OF WEEKLY MEETINGS IN THE PLAZA DE MAYO,
 SOON AFTER MRS. DE VICENTI LEFT HER HOME FOR SHOPPING. REPORTEDLY
 MRS. DE VICENTE STRUGGLED, BUT IN THE END WAS FORCED INTO THE
 ABDUCTORS VEHICLES. AS OF NOON MONDAY DECEMBER 12 NOTHING WAS
 KNOWN OF THE WHEREABOUTS OF ANY OF THE PERSONS TAKEN.

3. THE MOTHERS' GROUP HAD BECOME PARTICULARLY ACTIVE AS THE
 CHRISTMAS SEASON APPROACHED, PLANNING TWO MAJOR DEMONSTRATIONS AND
 PLACEMENT OF A LARGE ADVERTISEMENT IN "LA NACION," A LEADING
 BUENOS AIRES DAILY. THE CHURCH FROM WHICH SOME FIFTEEN PERSONS
 WERE TAKEN WAS ONE OF THREE POINTS IN THE CITY FOR COLLECTING
 SIGNATURES AND MONEY FOR THE PAID ADVERTISEMENT. IN ADDITION TO
 TAKING THE FIFTEEN GROUP MEMBERS, WHO HAD BEEN
 MEETING INSIDE THE CHURCH, "SECURITY OFFICERS" -- WHO USED SIX
 UNMARKED CARS FOR THEIR OPERATION -- TOOK SOME \$250 COLLECTED
 BY THE GROUP AND A LIST OF SIGNATURES FOR THE ADVERTISEMENT.
 (COMMENT: THE ADVERTISEMENT DID APPEAR IN LA NACION'S DECEMBER
 10 EDITION.)

4. THE PARTICULAR COLLECTION SITE AT WHICH THE ACTION TOOK
 PLACE -- THE CHURCH OF SANTA CRUZ-- WAS BEING MANAGED BY MEMBERS
 OF THE "MOVIMIENTO ECUMENICO POR LOS DERECHOS HUMANOS" ("MEDH"),
 DESCRIBED AS AN ARGENTINE AFFILIATE OF THE WORLDWIDE CATHOLIC
 ORGANIZATION "PAZ Y JUSTICIA." ACCORDING TO THE BUENOS AIRES
 HERALD -- THE ONLY LOCAL NEWSPAPER TO COVER THE EVENT--

~~Department of State, A/GIS/IPS/SRP~~

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MEMBERS OF THE GROUP TAKEN INCLUDED ESTER CARRIAGA, ONE OF THE MOTHERS PROMINENT IN THE PROTEST MOVEMENT, AND A FRENCH NUN KNOWN AS "HERMANA ALICIA." OTHER PERSONS TAKEN INTO CUSTODY AND LISTED BY THE HERALD WERE MARIA PONCE DE BLANCO, PATRICIA OVIEDO, JULIO FONEVILA, HORACIO ANIBAL ELBERT, EDUARDO GABRIEL ORANI AND RAQUEL BULIT. A FULL LIST IS NOT AVAILABLE BECAUSE OF CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE ARREST-- PERSONS AT THE CHURCH WERE NOT ALL KNOWN TO ONE ANOTHER, AND IT WAS NOT POSSIBLE FOR THOSE NOT

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TAKEN TO SAY WITH PRECISION WHICH OF THEIR NUMBER HAD BEEN GRABBED.

5. THE ABDUCTION OF REMO BERARDO HAS NOT YET BEEN REPORTED IN THE PRESS. BERARDO HAS BEEN ACTIVE IN THE "DISAPPEARANCE ISSUE" SINCE HIS OWN BROTHER'S DISAPPEARANCE IN JULY OF 1976. HE WAS A USEFUL CONTACT OF THE EMBASSY AND WAS SCHEDULED TO MEET WITH THE AMBASSADOR ON DECEMBER 14.

6. ON SUNDAY DECEMBER 11 A MEMBER OF THE MOTHERS' GROUP MET WITH EMBASSY POLITICAL OFFICER TO REQUEST EMBASSY AND DEPARTMENT OF STATE ACTION ON BEHALF OF MISSING MOTHERS AND MEDH MEMBERS. MISS LUCIA BERARDO CALLED ON EMBASSY ON DECEMBER 12 WITH SIMILAR PLEAS FOR HER MISSING BROTHER. THE PERMANENT ASSEMBLY FOR HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE LEAGUE FOR THE RIGHTS OF MAN PLAN TO SUBMIT HABEAS CORPUS PETITIONS FOR DISAPPEARED PERSONS WHOSE NAMES ARE KNOWN TODAY, DECEMBER 12.

7. AMBASSADOR SEES ADMIRAL MASSERA THIS EVENING AND WILL INQUIRE WHAT IS KNOWN ABOUT THIS MATTER AND REGISTER OUR CONCERN.
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